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HOMEMAKERS' CHAT

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U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
OFFICE OF INFORMATION

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SUBJECT: The Well-Fed Child.....Information from nutritionists of the United States Department of Agriculture.

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Do you ever wonder if those well-balanced meals you try to give little Jimmy and Jane really contain the foods the children need? Nutritionists of the United States Department of Agriculture say that you can tell....to some extent....just how effective your meals are.

Child nutritionists have developed a check list....a number of general points to look for.. that show whether or not a child is eating the right things. Let's run over the list.

First of all....a child who gets all the foods he needs should have a well developed body.....straight arms and legs. His posture ought to be perfect. He should hold himself straight and tall....stomach in....head and chest up... shoulder blades flat.

What about his weight? Well...a child whose meals are adequate ought to be fat enough so that his bones don't stick out. The lines in his body should be slight curves...not angles. And his muscles should be hard....firm...well developed. Flabby fat often means too much of some kinds of food - and maybe not enough of other kinds. It isn't an indication of good health.

A normal child who's getting plenty of the right foods along with the rest and exercise he needs should have bright clear eyes. Not a trace of dark hollows or blue circles. His hair should be glossy. His teeth...well formed and sound. His gums should be light pink, firm. They don't bleed easily. You know...unhealthy guns are often caused by poor diet.

The child's skin should be smooth...firm and have a good color. No sallow,

palid skin for the well-fed youngster. The linings of his mouth and eyelids should have a pinkish tinge. That shows a good supply of red blood.

Of course you know that a healthy child's appetite and digestion are tip-top. When he goes to bed, he should sleep soundly...wake up refreshed.

Many times a bad disposition...an irritable, fussy period in a child's life... can be chalked up to not getting enough of the right foods. A child who is fortified by a well-balanced diet should be good natured and full of pep. His expression ought to be alert....cheerful as he goes through the day...and his general health should be vigorous. He should be better able to meet the normal exposures he gets to cold and other diseases at school.

That about covers the list. And the list about covers the child...doesn't it? But that's easy to understand. Diet affects every part of the body. If a child isn't getting all the foods he needs, it's likely to show up in any number of ways.

Next comes the question....what is a well-balanced diet anyway? That's not so easy to answer in a few words. Food needs vary for children of different ages and for adults doing different things. But each person should have some of every group of foods every so often.

Here's one plan that's been worked out to give the vitamins, minerals and other food values adding up to a balanced diet.

Starting with milk. You serve a child three or four cups of milk every day. For adults...it's three cups.

Also daily, comes a serving of sweet or Irish potatoes. By this plan, you could sometimes serve them even twice a day.

As for citrus fruit and tomatoes...they're our major sources of vitamin C. And four or five servings a week for the average member of the family is in order. And allow for more servings of citrus fruit and tomatoes for the very young children and pregnant or nursing mothers.

Green and yellow vegetables next. The plan suggests we serve them as often as 12 or 13 times or more a week. Those are vegetables like collards, kale, spinach, other greens, carrots, peas, okra, green asparagus, snap beans, yellow squash and green cabbage.

Then plan for other fruits and vegetables too. Like apples, bananas, corn, beets, turnips and so on....from eight to 12 or 13 times a week on them.

You know we all need a certain amount of protein...or body building foods. We can get the protein from several different sources...or from a combination of those sources...This is what the plan we're considering suggests: Lean meat..... poultry, and fish....served five or six times a week. Dry beans, peas or nuts once or twice a week.

And eggs...while they're in a class of foods all by themselves...also provide protein along with their other values. We'd serve them four or five times a week... more often when they're plentiful....if we were following this scheme.

Then we need some fats and oils to add to the appetite appeal and also to give our foods a stick-to-the-ribs quality.

Finally we like some sugar, sirups and preserves. About 12 ounces a week of sweets for most people is allowed in this plan. But young children are better off with less.

In general...though....if you can include plenty of each food group in your meals every week.....little Jimmy and Jane should stand a good chance of rating high on the check list for a well-fed child.

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